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Bulking Up On Insurance Jobs

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Reports of Hartford's demise as an insurance city have been exaggerated.

Aetna helped see to that recently when the company announced that it intends to transfer 3,600 jobs to the city from its Middletown offices by 2010. Couple that with the announcement only days earlier that St. Paul Travelers will add another 500 jobs at its downtown facilities, and suddenly Hartford is looking beefy again.

To facilitate the move, Aetna also plans to build a new nine-story garage with 1,200 parking spaces at Flower Street and Farmington Avenue and make renovations to its Tower Building, where the bulk of the employees will be housed.

The addition of 4,100 new jobs more than offsets the 2,000 positions that will be lost next year when ING, which has been leasing the Tower Building from Aetna, transfers its employees to a new building in Windsor, and the other 1,200 jobs lost when MassMutual Financial Group closed its Asylum Hill offices and moved to Enfield.

City officials say they've assessed the potential impact of the additional office workers on traffic and transit along Farmington Avenue and have found that the negative effect, if any, will be minimal.

No surprise there. Although the additional insurance workers will be a welcome sight, Hartford still has a way to go to match the levels of insurance employment that it housed only a generation ago.

Nevertheless, the new jobs send a message to other insurers of renewed faith in the city's ability to accommodate them.

Come on in, the water's fine.

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